Marian

A Prisoner's Soliloquy

A Temperance Poem

I. M. Soley

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By ISABELLA M. SOLEY

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MOTTOES.

Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.—Prov. xiv. 34.

God bless every one, American, English or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world.—Livingstone.

"Let us have faith, that right makes might."

"Be sure you put your feet in the right place; then stand firm."

"I want it said of me that I plucked a thistle and planted a flower."—Lincoln.

DEDICATION.

To those everywhere, who are convinced of the terrible, widespread and ever increasing evils of the manufacture and licensed sale of intoxicants, and that total prohibition is the only effectual remedy, this little booklet is, with great pleasure and respect, dedicated by the author.

PREFACE.

THE author of this soliloquy read an account of a man being arrested for the murder of his wife by a blow given when temporarily insane from the effects of alcohol. The saloonkeeper who tempted this reformed man, was also a magistrate, and gave the warrant for his arrest. The thoughts of this prisoner, as suggested, together with varied incidents and experiences in connection with city mission work are embodied in this poem.

I trust it will commend itself to every true patriot who would gladly use all his or her influence to destroy this gigantic sin of the nations. Heaven speed the day; and bless everywhere and in all ways that are wisest and best, every true friend of the temperance cause.

Very truly,

I. M. S.

Marian

A Prisoner's Soliloquy

I.

Where am I? Speak! What bare bleak walls are these?
These windows barred? Great heavens! Is this a jail?
Why am I here? Why am I not at home?
My pleasant, happy, tasteful, peaceful home,
Lighted by Marian's smiles. Why am I here?
Take, take me to my home. This is not home.
There, are soft carpets; every window hung
With graceful drapery. From crystal vases
Ever look forth flowers, the sweetest and the loveliest.
There, from the polished grate—
The evening fire sends forth its cheerful glow;
And flickering plays with each familiar thing;
Now here, now there, so warm, so bright, its touch,
A thing of beauty; best, brightest, when it shines

On Marian's pure and lovely face. On Marian's,
Filled with happy, peaceful light; affection's light;
Love's sun, o'er which has never passed a cloud,
Since first it rose; in life's bright morn arose,
And looked out sweetly from her gentle eyes;
And made earth seem like heaven. This is not home.
Here all is strange and homeless; bleak and bare;
Shut in, barred in; Say, tell me, why is this?
In mercy speak; haste; would you drive me wild?

II.

What did you say? That I was in a jail?
What mean your words? I, in a jail?
Jails are for criminals; not such as I;
I, to whom justice, honor, truth and love,
To all mankind, were constant watchwords.
Peace, you are wild; unlock these prison doors;
And let me hasten quickly to my home.

III.

Hark! hark, what do I hear? A voice that sounds
Solemn and far away. It is a wild
And fearful dream. A voice; what does it say?
I have no home, O God! And that I am
In jail for murder. I, a murderer! I!
O never, never, never! O my God!
Not on my honest name, that deadly brand.

My brain is whirling. Am I sick, or wild?
In jail for murder; I! impossible.
Who did I murder? Can you tell me that?
I murder, did you say? When? Where? How?
Who?
My wife, and does she know? Did you tell her?

IV.

And one made answer then—Your wife; alas:
It was your wife you murdered.

V.

He heard no more;
For the dread words rang through that gloomy cell;
Fell on his ears, as falls a thunder knell;
And dropping suddenly, as dead, he fell.

VI.

What dismal place is this? Bare floor and walls;
Barred windows, heavy bars; that shut out half
The day; a narrow bed; a single chair;
A little table; and ah, worse than all,
The door, strong, double locks, and massive bolts,
Are drawn between me and the outside world;
They shut me in from all I love on earth;
From all its fresh green beauty; all its life;
Its loving, suffering, kindred human souls;
From all the breathing, moving, working world.

These dreadful barriers bolt me from my home;
Are drawn between me and my noble boy;
The sweet, low music of my daughter's voice;
And the glad welcome of my Marian's eyes.
Shut up, confined within this gloomy cell;
Just light enough to make me not forget
That there is light; to not forget the grand
Old Sun; who smiles and ever smiles and makes
The Earth rejoice; while ever looking back
With answering smiles, into his glorious face.

VII.

And I am here; for what? Ah, it comes back
To me. For murder, did they say? When? Who?
It seems like ages since I heard that voice,
That called me murderer.
Who did they say I murdered?
O my God! My wife! O Marian, Marian! No;
It cannot, cannot be. She, whom I loved
More than my life. My Marian, thou, for whose
Dear sake, I could have died; could willingly
Have died; to save thy precious, priceless life;
Or shielded thee from pain or sorrow.

VIII.

Speak; speak again; could I have heard aright?
A blow when drunk; a deadly, fatal blow.
A blow! and Marian! Struck Marian, did

You say? My gentle wife, when I was drunk?
Drunk! drunk! it comes; it comes! Who made me
drunk?
Ah, I remember now. The cruel hand
Held out to me; the bland and specious smiles;
And how the red wine sparkled in the glass
And moved and showed its beaded eye; and when
Its odor touched my senses, how the thirst awoke;
The thirst, which I had thought would wake no
more;
That I had striven for years to overcome;
Had striven for Marian's sake, and thought myself
A victor. God had helped me; Christ had helped
Me; and I thought, that never more would I
Touch the accursed thing. O Christ, my Lord,
I thought that I was past temptation; that
the deadly thirst had gone to sleep forever.
Fatal mistake.
Unarmed, unguarded, when I saw that cup
Brimming with beaded wine, the slumbering thirst
Awoke; woke suddenly and mightily; woke like
A demon; like an uncaged tiger woke;
Raged through my veins; burnt through my nerves,
And fired my brain. Forgive me, O my God!
My Saviour, my Redeemer, pardon me.
Alas I looked upon the wine, when it
Was red; when all its tempting color glowed;
When there, the serpent coiled; and moved himself

Aright; Ah me, the poisonous bite. 'Tis past.
I feel the adder's sting; at last, at last.

IX.

I looked upon that deadly cup; aye more—
I touched, I snatched it eagerly; and more—
I drank the draught; I drained it to the dregs;
And all was lost. My brain was maddened; and
How many more I drained, I know not; ask—
That Cain behind the bar. He knows. He knows.
What will he say? Am I my brother's keeper?
Like the old Serpent in the garden, he;
His brother's tempter. He destroys his brother.
His brother's murderer. He degrades, destroys,
Enslaves. The brand of Cain is on his brow.
Ah, thou hast ruined me and murdered mine;
Red-handed slayer of thy brother man;
Thy brother's blood must ever from the ground
Cry out against thee.

X.

Mine and Marian's; aye,
Marian, Marian; other faces rise
Before me now; brave, noble, beautiful,
Beloved; with heavenly gifts, by patient toil
To highest culture wrought; the light of homes,
The joy of hearts; dragged from the sunlit heights,
On which they proudly stood; down, down, to
shame;

To poor, degraded, trembling, shaking things;
Like withered leaves upon the tree of life;
And falling prone with every passing breeze;
Nerveless and strengthless, as they fluttering rags;
Scarcely a semblance of the human left;
But loathsome blots on our humanity.
Naught left them but a grave; a drunkard's grave;
A hopeless grave; a grave that closes them
From all the righteousness, the joy, the peace
And glory of God's kingdom.

XI.

A ruined life; a sudden, fearful death;
A soul forever lost; is this not murder?
Are these not poisoned? And with that which blights
And kills the body; hardens, scorches and
Burns up the brain, and shrivels all the soul;
All, all, with all its great capacities.
If, like the ocean deep, this deadly draught
Would make it a Sahara. Were it vast
As the whole universe, or high as heaven
This cup of death destroys the noblest man,
And makes him worse than idiot. Better far,
Be born a fool, and tread the lane of life
In senseless innocence, than born with great
Capacities for good, great soul, great hopes,

Great possibilities; every nerve
Thrilling to every touch of joy or pain;
To have all withered, shrunken, scorched and burnt
Into a blasted ruin, by a slow
And sure and deadly poison, dealt by him,
And such as him, who yesterday reached out
That poison cup to me; that brought me where I am.

XII.

He knew; he knew that I was once enslaved;
He knew my fearful struggles and my falls;
And my escape; how long I had been free;
At what a price I had obtained my freedom;
And what a priceless boon it was to me.
And I had influenced others, too. For they,
My boon companions, who had seen me slave,
Now saw me free. They gathered strength and hope.
I, who had long been toiling at the oar,
A galley slave of rum; and those who make
Their gold by selling it, now daily used
My freedom well. With constant, patient toil,
I sawed and ever sawed the cruel chains
That loaded and that cursed my brothers.
And as I worked I ever prayed, and bade
Them look to Him, the blessed Christ who once
Was lifted up that men might look to him,

Who is the life, the light. Some hugged their
chains,
And would not have them loosed. But there were
some
That sorrowed for the past. They laid their sins
On Him, who died to bear them, trusted Him
To give them life and power; to make them free
Indeed. They looked, and lo! the serpent's bite
Was healed, and they were free, and sang His praise
From Whom deliverance came.

XIII.

But what of him, the dread destroyer? him,
Who preys upon his race? The licensed thief,
Licensed betrayer, murderer of his fellows;
Not poor himself, yet making many rich;
But who grew rich, by making many poor.
Ah, what of him? he watched me, marked me. Saw
With growing hate, that wished to work me ill,
To change the current's course, that turned his mill
I worked; to stop the ceaseless mill; the mill
That took in bread, and gave forth serpents in
Its place. For eggs gave poison. For pure gold,
Gave poverty, decay, disease and death;
Alas, the second death; eternal death;
That never dies; the fire that never can
Be quenched.

XIV.

He sought to catch
Me in his toils again. The human reptile
Lurking in his den; he wove his wily web,
And set his secret snare, and waiting, watched,
To catch my unwary feet. Ah, evil hour;
I came too near. The deadly serpent sprang;
Transfixed me with his cruel fangs; and twined
His loathesome, strong and many winding coils
Round heart and brain; and I am here alone,—
Lost, lost, a captured prisoner for crime,
A deadly crime, the murder of my wife.
O, Marian, Marian, Marian! Art thou gone?
And by my hand. Alas! I did not know.
It was the fiery poison laid thee low.
That, not thy Archie, gave the fatal blow.

XV.

And he, the tempter, monster, he who wrought
With anxious care to make me victim; he
Who mixed the fiery, fatal draught, infused
With other subtle poisons; he who made
Me Marian's murderer. O, my God, Thou knowest,
Thou clearly knowest, I knew not what I did.
And when I woke in this drear, narrow cell,
Knew not what I had done. Am I, in thy
Sight guilty of the crime, or he who gave

The poison? I, or he? who in the name
Of law, laid unclean hands on me. Yes, hands
So stained, so darkly stained; at thought of them,
I start with terror of his coming doom.
He dared to lay his hands upon, and bring
Me here. He has a double license, so
It seems, from the same righteous guardians of
The peace—license to sell me poison, death
And madness; license, too, to place me here;
A lonely captive, in a lonely cell,
For what I did when my bewildered brain
Was fired to madness by the draught he gave—
Licensed to give his neighbor drink; to make
Him drunken; when a mighty voice cries, Woe,
Woe, woe, to him that ever does so.
The voice of Him, of Him who made the world;
And watches it; its omnipresent king,
The great omniscient guardian of the peace,
Who now looks down, where once He dwelt; where once
He died; to which he will one day come back,
And call the faithless stewards to account.

XVI.

Licensed to sell his brother drink; to make
Him drunken; yes, to murder all he can
By poison; Aye, the law protects and shields
Him, while he carries on his deadly trade.

The very law, which binds with heavy chains
His crazy victims, for a sudden blow,
All blindly given. Perchance a fatal blow,
As that I gave. Licensed to break the laws
Of God. And he to punish others; he
To dare lay finger on his victim. He
Will say, the law protects me. What a law,
That breaks God's law? A short protection that.
Laws made for pelf, or party purposes, and which
Ignore God's higher law, are null and void.
Can they protect him when his spirit stands
Before his Maker's bar? Can they ward off
The awful vials of His wrath? Can they,
O can they shelter from the frown of Him,
Whose laws have been defied, betrayed,
Whose righteous mandates broken.

XVII.

Who is responsible for Marian's death?
The tempter or the tempted? Say, O say,
Ye thoughtful ones, who think, and deeply think;
Who trace effects up to their certain cause,
As rivers to their source, then back again,
From cause, trace all the mazy windings of
Effect, as does the explorer rivers. Brave
And heroic men, with patient toil have searched
To find the sources of the Nile, so long
A mystery. But, ah, we know the source,

The deadly source of this long, broad, deep, swift,
World-sweeping tide of death. All see and know,
Except the would-be blind, who shut their eyes,
Who will not look, lest haply they should see;
Who will not pause in the mad rush for gold
One moment to consider.

XVIII.

Speak, tell me who is guilty, he, or I?
Ah, would to God, that he had given the blow
To me, which I to Marian gave. Ah, Christ,
Would he had struck me dead. Far better thus,
Than give to me accursed alcohol.
Would I have killed her, but for him? Would I
Have struck the being whom I loved the most?
The star of my existence; her, my heart's
Crown jewel; her, without whose presence all
The world is but a dreary, cheerless void;
A day without a sun; a desert plain
Without an oasis; a thirsty waste
Without a single flower; a wilderness
Where springs no fountain; prairie broad and vast,
Of wearying sameness; where no graceful tree
Stretches its leafy arms. Would I harm her?
Without the sunshine of whose happy smile,
There is no music in the rapturous songs
Of the free birds; the warbling brook has none;
The shining river, on its winding way

To the great sea, without her, has for me,
No beauty and no song. The mighty swell
Of the broad ocean's heaving bosom, means
Woe to me now. Ah, how I loved to sit,
With Marian by my side, at sunlit eve
Upon the sands; to watch its shining face;
And see its waters swelling at my feet;
With that low, mystic, dreamy music, that
I loved so well. But that is over now;
And I am here. O, where is Marian now?
Earth is a barren waste where she is not;
Home is no home to me where she is not.
I have no home; naught but what once was home;
Ah no, that is not mine; my home is here.
A jail, my only home. It matters not.
Aye, strike my fetters off, and set me free;
All earth would be a dismal, gloomy cell,
And I a prisoner. All of alcohol.
Should I not hate so vile a monster?
They call it "God's good creature," such as he,
Who gave the poisoned cup, that maddened me.

XIX.

And he dare lay his villainous, blood-red hand,
His murderous hand on me and bring me here,
For murder of my wife; he to arrest;
To carry me to jail. Take note: Ha, ha,
The very friends might laugh, who helped him,

And exult, at their success and his. And he
Is free to carry on his deadly trade;
Free to ensnare, betray his fellow-men;
And shear them of their locks of strength. He, free,
A wholesale murderer free? Yes, more than free,
A servant of the law, arrested me,
While guilty, guilty, guilty he.

XX.

He had a warrant to arrest me. Hear!
And from the very man who dared to give
Him legal right to poison me, to kill
Me if he could. He put the weapon in
My hand. Held out to me the cup of death,
The cup of madness; then he bade me drink,
And madly I obeyed. The serpent coiled
Around my brain in scaly torturing folds,
And bade me strike. Father I knew not what
I did; for reason, self-control were fled.
But Father, not so he. Ah yes, he did,
He knew all that the cup would do for me;
Would I but take one glass. He meant my ruin.
And he is horror-stricken now; at such
A fearful crime; and he its cruel cause.

XXI.

Who is the dangerous man among his fellows,
I, or he? I, safe and saving others, but

For him. He, poisoning and degrading others,
And licensed too, to poison other men,
To carry on the ministry of death.
And I am here in this dark cell, condemned.
Alas, the fatal blow, I gave to Marian
When my brain was maddened by the fiery draught,
He had a legal right to give. And I
Am here in this bleak prison-house, debarred
From all my work; the noble, hallowed work
Which my soul loved, the ministry of life;
To call all men my brothers; stretch out hands
Of help to all who needed help; to save
And bless and elevate. Because of this,
This trader in bondslaves and souls of men,
Was my sworn enemy. He hated me,
Because I had escaped his toils; and stood
Upon my feet and said, Am I not, too,
A man. He hated me because I tried
To help and strengthen others.

XXII.

An angel's power; a serpent's craft applied
And practiced, for so many thousand years,
On our lapsed race, where none are over wise,
And few are wise at all. Where is our hope
When those who should be helpers, those in power,
With blinded eyes and hardened hearts which will
Not see, nor hear, are with the serpent leagued,

To deck and crown and make respectable,
To give increasing life and power and force,
To this great beast so terrible; this beast—
This many horned and many headed beast
That stalks the earth?
This deadly monster rising from the still,
Who sweeping o'er the earth, blasts and destroys
Vast armies of humanity. Far, far,
More terrible than famine, pestilence,
And war combined. Alas, the very sun
And the free air are darkened by the smoke,
The belching, poisonous, black and sickening
smoke,
Breathed from the pit from which the locusts
spring,

With such a deadly sting; whose power is to
Hurt men. O, Alcohol, thou art a vampire;
Art drunken with the blood of millions of
Our race. Thou art a monster parasite,
Who, with ten thousand cruel fangs dost grasp,
The stately, beautiful and shadowing tree,
Of human life; the life, which lifts its head
To heaven, and wears a more than princely crown
Of glorious foliage, strong and myriad leaved;
All tremulous, with thousand budding hopes
And loves, high aims, bright prospects, and a world,
A grand, new opening, undiscovered world
Of life and thought; that rises on the growing

Soul, and looms up in the distance. But,
This monstrous growth, this moral night shade, eats,

And surely eats, straight tc the very heart
Of this, so pleasant and so goodly tree,
And it begins to wither; withers still;
The foliage droops and then the vigorous green
To yellow turns; the leaves begin to drop,
Then falling, falling, until all are gone;
And the bare branches bleak and naked, stretch,
Between the earth and heaven. The very trunk
Is eaten to the heart. There comes a blast
Some day, and it is levelled; and becomes
Unsightly rubbish; fuel for the flames.
Not this in winter, but in life's bright prime;
In the mid-summer of his year; this comes
To pass. And then, the twining ivy green
And beautiful, of womanhood, which clung
Around the stately tree; and wound and wove
Its tendrils for support, and lived beneath
Its shadow; how that withered as the tree
Decayed; how rudely it was torn at last;
And when, at length the rotten, blasted trunk
Fell to the earth, how this, too, fell, and bled
Its life away. And then, the flowers of childhood,
Pure and sweet and innocent; so like
The "Lily of the Valley"; they, that sprung
Beneath the shadow of those spreading boughs,

Guarded and sheltered; ah, they withered, too;
When the green foliage fell. The noontide heat
Fell on them, then, too fiercely, and the blasts
Of autumn chilled them, and in winter's frosts,
Full many perished. But a remnant lived;
Still lived and lingered on, a wan and weak,
A blighted, sickly life, unkempt, untrained,
Uncultured, growing wild as wildest weeds
That ever grew; until those swelling buds,
That gave such promise once, at length became
A tangled, useless scrawl of thorns and briars;
Where serpents crawled and hissed; where bloated spiders
Wove their webs; where deadly adders stung;
Where vile, envenomed vipers lurked unseen;
Where poisons, grew among that tangled green;
And rank, unsightly, noxious tares were seen;
Far better, far, if they had never been.

XXIII.

Why, why, this dreary waste? which once bid fair
To be a cultured garden? Why the wild
And sprawling bramble? where once brightly sprang
A plant, that should be rising now; grown up
In youth; tall, straight and beautiful. Why all
These rough, ungainly, rude, unpolished stones?

Those restless, rolling stones, which never clothe
Themselves with moss, to give them beauty,
Which never have a firm foundation fixed,
To give them strength; and make them a support
By life's wayside. These stones that mar the fair,
Smooth surface of the fields, had they been hewn,
Been squarely hewn and brightly polished, would
Have furnished many precious corner stones,
Fitted to grace a palace. But, alas, alas,
The Sculptor was not wise. He was deceived,
Betrayed; the serpent coiling in a cup of wine,
Sprang forth, and stung him; palsied his right arm
Of strength; the fiery poison shrivelled up
His brain; the studio of his broadening mind,
The goodly chamber where his spirit dwelt;
His soul's bright home; a home of magic wonders,
Mystical and rare; the wondrous working of
The mighty architect divine.
Yes, alcohol—

The cruel monster, held his flaming torch
Forth as the sculptor worked, and fired that home;
Then all the skill and power departed from
His hand, the beauty from his soul; and made
His work a ruin. Why, these mighty trees,
These glorious trees; so blasted, burnt as by
The lightning's flash? The very trunks are riven.
See, see them standing now; by thousands now;
Like useless driftwood, all along the shores,

Of life's swift river. Who destroyed all these?
These are the ruined. Who this ruin wrought?
Whence all this waste; this scourge, this withering
blight,
On the bright foliage and the fragrant flowers;
On all the grandeur, glory, beauty, grace
Of our humanity? My soul, in vision sees,
As once a prophet saw, a valley full
Of bones, of those who once had walked the earth,
In all the pride of glorious manhood. There
They lay; the silent remnants of a host
Innumerable. They were very many,
And were very dry. Who slew this vast
And mighty army? Thou art the demon, thou,
Dark, terrible destroyer; that dost rise
From the black smoke of the distiller's pit,
And breathes out fire and flame. A deadly flame;
A keen, blue flame, that scorches, burns and blasts,
And ruins and degrades, the loftiest soul;
Yea, drives it madly on to woe and death;
On to eternal darkness. Breathing out
A fire, that ever sweeps upon the vast,
The human prairie, heaving like the sea,
The mighty sea; and leaving in its track,
A black and ghastly ruin.

XXIV.

Alas, that I
Should have to say it; they, who have the power
To soon destroy this dread, devouring monster,
This awful vampire; preying on our race;
This vulture fierce; who sits upon his crag,
Who sits and watches, waiting to devour.
Ah, hear it heaven, that those, their fellow-men
Have trusted, through that trust, have raised to seats
Of power; those whose united voices, blent
As one great voice, gave you your power, have lent
It to you; lent to plan, devise and scheme
In one united counsel; wisely plan,
And for their country's good. Alas, that they
Should so betray their trust. That those who rule
The nations should agree to give such power
And strength, to such a deadly beast, so great,
So worldly-wide, so terrible in might;
That army numberless his power has slain,
Whose dry bones fill death's valley; those who now
Are being slain; and those who will be slain;
Will yet arise; will stand upon their feet;
And you will meet the victims, face to face;
Yes, you will meet them, who refuse to chain
This dread, devouring monster of the still;
But framed such laws as let him roam at will;
And gave him power and liberty to kill.

Distiller, you will meet them; you who keep
The license key, and sell it, to create
An open bar; as that I know of; and
That brought me here. A licensed bar! a curse,
No matter where it is, in town or country.
Yes, you will meet them in His presence; His,
Whose eyes are as a flame of fire; whose feet
As finest brass, that in a furnace burns;
And whose almighty voice, is as the sound
Of many waters; from Whose mouth proceeds
A sharp, two-edged sword, with which to smite
All things of evil; those who do, and who
Give power to evil, who abuse the power,
But given to them of God. Yes, you will meet
The armies of the slain, ye powers that be,
In that dread presence, when the trembling heavens
Shall flee away, the mountains be not found,
And with a wild, affrighted, bitter cry,
Call for the rocks; call for the hills to fall
And hide you, hide you from the burning eye
Of your offended judge.

XXV.

Hear, hear in heaven, Thy lofty dwelling-place,
Thou great Creator of the human race,
What men dare do, on this Thy footstool, when
They have but power. They dare make legal that
On which Thou hast pronounced such fearful woe.

For what, great Father? Can, O can it be,
A voice rings in my ear; can this be true?
This trade goes on to swell the revenue.
This trade, in woe and death, goes briskly on;
This trade, the broad, well-beaten road to crimes,
Of every name, to every human woe.
The curse rolls on; the deadly curse rolls on,
And why? Are all men mad, or fools, or worse?
This curse rolls on, to build a revenue.
What, blast and blight and scourge a nation's homes;
The home, the nation's rock; its corner-stone.
Shake its foundations, for a paltry gain;
A paltry, seeming gain; but real loss.
Lasting, great, deep, unmeasurable loss.
Look at the sufferer, tossing on his couch;
And call that strength and vigor, which is born
Of fever and delirium; but, never call
That gain which makes men poor; whose very touch,
Brings blight and shame. Alas, I, here in jail;
Behold me here, a victim of the trade,
Which heartless men are licensed to pursue;
Heaven hear it! to increase the revenue.
Father of love, how long, O Lord, how long?
All power in heaven and earth to Thee belong;
Wilt Thou look down and see this mighty wrong;

Ere Thou dost smite. How long; how long; how long;
Before the seething cup of wrath is filled,
And overflows. Behold, behold me here;
A blighted, blasted product of the trade;
Not the illicit trade. No, that is for
The slums; the thousands ruined by the curse
Of legal traffic, now its castaways.
A license: what is that? A pillar strong
And mighty, which the law supplies, to give
This giant evil power to wreck mankind.
Ah, license is the curse, the ruin and
The bane, the social bane, this and not that,
That hides itself away in dismal dens,
Beyond the eye of law. 'Tis license kills;
'Tis license ruins men; the other feeds
Upon the ruined; those the licensed trade
Has cast away; as the receding tide
Casts on the shore, the useless driftwood. Yes,
The low, vile den, on which majestic law
Would look with withering frown, and sweep it from
Existence; is the progeny of that
Saloon, on which he smiles. The low, black craft,
The pirate craft, that sails in the deep shade
Of night; has only those on board made waifs
And outcasts, by the previous voyages made
On board the licensed privateer, whose king

Is angel of the burning pit; whose captain is
Alcohol.

XXVI.

Beneath the goodly shadow of the law,
The first, the fatal glass, is given, in all
The fresh, young glory of his opening years,
To dawning manhood. Then, protected by
His legal cloak, he smiles, with wily arts,
He tracks and lures his victim, on along
The downward road, until, alas! at length,
He plunges on with terrible momentum.
Then poverty and degradation come
Like strong, armed men; and he, the heartless
shape,
In guise of man, who had a legal right
To ruin him; thus robs him of his manhood,
Then kicks the crazy, ragged, gibbering wretch,
The awful wreck that he himself has made,
Out in the storm and darkness. I have seen
It done, so many, many times; have heard
The stony-hearted, black destroyer, say,—
He would disgrace my house. Look, look on such
A one. Behold your work. It should disgrace
Your house. Should make of it a lasting terror.
Would God, that sight of one such human wreck,
Would then and there, with utter, deep disgrace,
Obscure that house, and every such, forever.

XXVII.

O, that I could send forth a mighty voice;
From out these dismal walls, that prison me;
To sound through all this great round, teeming world;
To warn all men, my brothers; not to come
Into the trap, whose cruel jaws will spring;
Where such a deadly viper coils within.
Ah! would to heaven, that from my burning brain,
My weary, throbbing, overburdened brain,
I could shut out the vision, horrible,
Of all that I have seen. How often, O,
How often, have I seen a once loved friend,
A battered, trembling ruin, of what once
Was man; whose presence would disgrace that house,
Where daily new and shining webs were wove,
To catch fresh victims. Seen him stagger on,
Away, away, from that vile den of thieves,
Where he had been deceived, betrayed and robbed;
Yes, robbed of everything: of name; of fame;
Of home, and happiness; of honor, wealth,
And manhood; everything that makes life life.
Thence, staggering on along the busy street,
A wretched, loathsome, pitiable sight,
At which the licensed liquor seller's well
Kept mastiff barked; full long and loudly barked,

And urchins jeered and laughed. The wreck passed on,
Still ever and anon reached out a hand,
A trembling hand for alms. Until, at length,
A vile decoy seized like a bird of prey,
And bore him where, from eye of law and day,
The same vile traffic, hides itself away;
Takes on its lowest forms, and slakes the thirst,
Waked otherwheres, with other viler drinks,
With others mixed, more deadly, fiery still,
Of the same poison draught. Alas, the work
Is finished soon; his latest home on earth,
The poor-house, or the maniac's cell, to die,
As oft by his own hand; lost, lost forever.
Father in heaven, the searchlight of Thine eye
Reachest through space; Thou knowest this is true;
These wrecks are made to swell the revenue.
Thou, who dost watch this fallen human race
Which were created for Thy pleasure, for
Thy glory and Thine honor; why, so blind, so weak?
Alas, to see them thus; whirled madly on;
In the swift, leaping, swirling rapids borne,
Of life's Niagara. On to the very verge;
Over the cataract, the fearful plunge,
Into the vortex of a lost eternity.

XXVIII.

I knew of many such. Were they all fools?
No, no, ten thousand times we answer, no.
Many, were men of might, who held vast crowds
For hours spellbound, with their resistless floods
Of eloquence. And many more, were men
Of wealth and culture and refinement; who
Had made their homes a sacred, shadowy bower
Where Genius loved to turn aside and rest.
Where in draped riches, sculptured beauty dwelt;
Where art and letters met with beaming smiles,
Religion there and science walked together;
They talked, consulted and compared accounts,
And long discoursed; each, of the place assigned
To each, in God's creation; and how each
Were best employed; and best could be about
Their Master's business. Then when sceptics looked
For science to assume the foremost place,
They paused, and closely clasped each other's hand;
And meek religion took the highest seat.
Then stately science bowed his lordly head;
And sat down humbly at her saintly feet,
To learn of her, and to her radiant face
Ever looked up, till from the bright reflex
Of that calm face above the face upraised,
Still ever grew more heavenly. Love was there;
Dwelt as presiding spirit in that home.

Aye, but the serpent came, and drove them forth;
Forth, from that happy, sheltered, peaceful home;
Almost an Eden; and ah, too, perhaps,
First to a modern Eve the tempter came;
The stately queen, of such a stately home,
As she prepared the viands for a feast,
Costly and rare, and she, in turn, became
The tempter; holding out with witching smiles,
The sparkling glass of brightly beaded wine;
And sweetly asked, and would not be denied
Her guests, the young and beautiful, to taste;
To drink it all; and with resistless grace
Such as the moonbeams when their peaceful sheen,
A magic beauty casts o'er nature's face;
Casts o'er the beauteous home our Father built,
The royal Eden garden which He made;
And planted, shaded, watered for the use
Of him, the glorious being whom His hand
Had made, but little lower than the angels;
Then bade him dress and keep it. But he fell;
And with him all his race. They fell; they fell;
But never lower than when locked and barred
In the dark dungeon of the castle grim,
Whose sovereign is the giant Alcohol;
Whose warder is a brainless, heartless shape;
The most distorted, meanest form of man;
Who does the giant's bidding; keeps the key,
The strong and oily key of license; turns

It glibly in the lock; on me; on you;
Will turn it on us, ere we are aware;
Then come not near; beware; beware; beware.
And you, ye stewards of the law; you, you,
Sell him this key, to help the revenue.
You make it legal for this human fiend,
To bind and hold these once so noble men;
Whose lives gave promise of as rich and ripe
And mellow fruitage as was ever found,
Upon the lofty tree of human nature.

XXIX.

Ah, yes, I say, you make it legal; you
Sell this soulless man the power to curse
These others; brother men; but, for this trade
In human souls; so noble and so great;
Perhaps so Christly; so prepared to enter in
The Father's kingdom; but through this vile trade,
From all its glory and its blessedness
Shut out forever. Yes, forevermore,
Through all the endless ages yet to be.
He takes these princes of the human race,
And makes them paupers. You, again I say,
Protect him for the paltry sum he pays
You for the awful power. How terrible.
And what is the result? This murderer of
His brothers; this ten-thousand fold, a Cain;
This creeping, sure assassin; land and river

Thief; this chief, insidious burglar; from
The pick of whose dread license key, no home
Is safe; is ever busy plying all
These trades in one combined. On, on, she goes,
This mightily condensed, steam engine of
Destruction. Ah, what hope for those who fall
Down bound and chained and helpless in the track
Of this fierce, fiery monster; this who knows
No mercy; never swerves or turns aside,
Or switches off. He stamps out manhood; stamps
Out childhood, womanhood, as on the hard
Quartz rock, the crusher stamps and grinds the
flints
To powder? Down they go; the happy homes,
With all their wealth of beauty, all their light
And warmth and comfort, all refinement go;
All culture, piety and prayer. The rum
Fiend ravins as the wolf. Down from the walls
He tears the costly pictures; tears with tooth
And claw, the sculptured marbles from their niches;
The gathered stores of choicest volumes, from
Their shelves; and cast them down in one confused,
Promiscuous heap of ruin. Then a torch,
Fed by the fumes of Alcohol, applied
To the sad wreck; and of the precious treasures,
Gathered, through all the past and happier years,
Makes a huge bonfire. Ah, that once bright home!
Pass by it now. Look on the ruin now.

Empty and silent, desolate and cold;
No cheerful firelight now, upon the hearth;
No living warmth looks from the windows now;
Now it is dark and tenantless and cold,
As the drear, hollow caverns of a skull,
Where once the bright eye shone. How sad. How lone.
The door-stone overgrown with tangled vines;
The sweet flowers choked to death with grasping arms
Of hateful weeds; the smooth, green velvet of
The lovely lawn, a tangled mass of tall,
Lank grasses, wildly tossed about; they sigh
And writhe and whistle in the driving winds,
Like restless, wretched, wailing human things,
That mourn the lost and ruined. Where are they
Who once dwelt there? Where is the lordly king?
Who as the eagle built his nest so high;
And had his castle there? King Alcohol
Besieged him boldly; battered down the hard,
Strong walls; the draw-bridge levelled; crossed the moat
And seized the master, in his upper room
And bore him far away; away in chains;
A helpless captive to a maniac's cell.
The lady of the castle, withered, died;
The children waifs and paupers. Such the fate
Of thousands, thousands of once happy homes;

In every land and country. Stop this work.
Arrest this thief. O, chain this dire assassin;
Haste; quarantine this spreading pestilence,
The suffering peoples say. The rum power shouts:
I have a license; touch me not, for I
Have power to spread this fierce disease; have paid
The rulers of the lands for liberty
To spread this plague; insert this poison into
Every vein I can. What, who are you?
This makes me rich and swells the revenue.

XXX.

Ye, who rule
The councils of the peoples, nevermore
Upon your standards, loudly blazon forth,
That might makes right; but ever let your might
Walk hand in hand with right. Be like to Him,
The blameless king who sought His people's good;
His people's good alone. Who was, in all
He sought and did, a faithful follower He,
Of Him, the habitation of Whose throne,
Is judgment and true justice. Like "Edyrn
Of Nudd", who wed, till it was clean, the wild,
Neglected garden of his heart. Weed out
This giant growth of sin; this thistle, which
Has never borne a fig; this bramble bush,
From which was never plucked a grape; this curse
Of earth; we know it by its deadly fruit;

Apples of Sodom, which to ashes turn,
And poison all who eat of them.

XXXI.

Forbidden fruit;
As that in earth's first garden, which He said,
Who planted it, "Of that thou shalt not eat,"
Of this, what saith the mighty Word of God?
What is His message to the tempted now?
Look not upon the cup, when it is fair
To look upon. Touch not the serpent, when
He moves himself aright. What to the tempter?
Woe, woe to him who gives to others, that
Which makes them drunken. But the serpent comes;
Still comes; he whispers in the tempter's ear:
Quick, give it to him; tell the same old lie;
'Twill make him wise; he shall not surely die.

XXXII.

Haste, to the rescue; build a mighty dam
Between this deadly fountain and our race.
Build up, as high as heaven, that so, at length,
This dread and swiftly sweeping tide of death
May cease its deadly flow. Build on; build on;
Ye men of heaven; ye soldiers of the cross;
Ye, whom your leader calls into the field.

Build though the great Goliah of the pit,
And all his legions swarm to bar your way;
To mar and stop your work. Build on; build on;
God and good angels help you; be your shield,
And guard you with a wall of fire; for more
Are they that be with you than they that be
With them. The battle may be long and sore
And hardly won; but victory is sure.
Approach this cruel, boasting giant, armed
Like Judah's youthful shepherd simply; meet
His power, inspired with trust for wisdom, strength,
In His availing name; before Whose might,
Hosts are as nothing; but will fly as chaff
Before the breathings of His glorious power.

XXXIII.

Father, we know it, that beneath these skies,
Through which Thou lookest on Thy creatures here;
And yet to know, that liberty is given
To such a juggernaut, to daily roll
Through all our streets; beneath the pressure of
Whose heavy wheels the power and nobleness
Of manhood; tenderness and love and grace,
Of suffering womanhood; the beauty and
The bliss of childhood's joy; are all crushed out.
Ye powers that be; that were ordained of God;

Ordained to punish and to hinder evil;
To nourish good; make strong and righteous laws;
And see that they are kept. Laws wise and pure;
Uplifting laws, and moulded laws to save
And bless, all whom they touch; to harmonize
With His, in Whom we live and move and have
Our being. Run in the blessed mold of His,
By Whose permission only you are there,
As stewards of His house. We pray you, in
The name of Him, who in that coming day,
Will summon you before the great white throne,
That He has set for judgment; there will call
You to account; how used, the stewardship
He gave. That you would rouse yourselves, at length,
Awake from your deep slumbers; and implore
That Christ Himself, Who is the source of light;
The one true light, would fill your souls with light;
Open your eyes and clothe you with His might.
Father, Omnipotent; Eternal One;
For His dear sake, in Whom Thou art well pleased,
In Jesus sacred name; the only name,
By which we can be saved; from these blind eyes
Cast out the beam, that they may look abroad,
And see and tremble for their land and country.

XXXIV.

Father, forgive them; for they seem to know
Not what they do. But speak Thy word of power;
Say unto them—"Ephthatha." Rise. Awake.
And send them forth to look abroad and see,
The swarming locusts spreading o'er the lands;
All beauty, greenness, blasting as they go;
Then like the heroes they were meant to be,
Rush to the conflict; haste, as though their own
Existence here and life forevermore,
Depended on the issue. Haste, quickly haste;
Chain the old serpent of the smoking still,
With such a chain, so strong, that all his power
Shall speedily depart, and nevermore
Shall he go forth in might, to blast and blight.
And to deceive the nations.

XXXV.

The sword of Local Option is too short,
Too dull and rusty; never will it pierce
The scaly folds, the double-plated armor
Of the huge giant springing from the still.
No, no, the gathering bands, the drilling ranks,
The mustering squadrons of the temperance hosts
Must seize the long, sharp, pointed, two-edged sword
Of Prohibition; form one solid square;

And with a cheer that rends the very heavens;
A prayer, that moves the arm, that moves the world;
A rush that nothing earthly can withstand,
Drive the bright, keen blade home; aye, home, right home;
Home to the cruel demon's very heart;
And leave it there. Give him a deadly wound,
That never can be healed. A wound of which
The monster curse will die. At one fell stroke
Cut off the long, strong tentacles that bind
The Senate and the Parliament; the Lords
And Commons, and the Congress, too; that so,
No more, no more, forever, will they sell
A license to those murderers to pursue
This deadly work to swell the revenue.
Then, when the King of Righteousness shall come,
He, looking on your work shall say, "Well done."
Because, though powerless to do all you would,
You yet were faithful and did what you could.

The End.

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